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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 21st meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 20 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman*: Mr. Penke ..... (Latvia)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 62: Advancement of women** (*continued*)

**(a) Advancement of women** (*continued*) (A/64/151, A/C.3/64/L.16, A/C.3/64/L.17 and A/C.3/64/L.19)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.16: Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women*

1. **Mr. Gonnet** (France), speaking also on behalf of the Netherlands, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.16. Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey had joined the sponsors. The aim of the draft resolution, which was based on the report of the Secretary-General on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151), was to review the activities undertaken by the United Nations to implement the previous year's resolution on that subject and to guide bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations to more sustained and intense follow-up efforts.

2. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary of the Committee) announced that Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Chile, Congo, El Salvador, Paraguay and Togo had also joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.17: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*

3. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.17, noted that Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Lichtenstein, Montenegro, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uruguay had joined the sponsors.

4. A number of revisions had been made to the draft resolution. In paragraph 13, the words "continues to encourage" had been substituted for the word "encourages" and the word "urges" had been substituted for the word "invites". In paragraph 16, the words "establishment of a" had been deleted and words "maximizing existing resources" added at end. In paragraph 20, the words "to the Convent had been deleted. In paragraph 22, a comma had b added after "organizations" and the words "where exist" had been added after the word "institutions".

5. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary of Committee) announced that Benin, Cameroon, Co Monaco, New Zealand, Paraguay and Sierra Leone also joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.19: Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas*

6. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia) said that Camer Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Jordan, Morocco and Thai had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. global economic downturn, fuel and food crises and threat of climate change posed significant challenge women in rural areas, where women still had access than men to financial and other assets reproductive health care was inadequate. It was important to address health-care facilities infrastructure and skilled primary-care staff in areas.

7. New language had been proposed sub-paragraphs 2 (g), (j) and (t) on strengthe measures to improve maternal health; promoting rights of women and girls with disabilities in areas by ensuring equal access to employment disability-sensitive infrastructure and services; developing the capacity of personnel working national development strategies. A new paragraph was proposed to identify and address the nega impacts of the current global combined crises, ur Governments, United Nations entities and all relevant stakeholders to take measures to identify address the negative impacts of the current gl crises on women in rural areas, including legisla policies and programmes that strengthen ge equality and the empowerment of women. delegation also proposed a new paragraph 8 inv Governments, relevant international organizations specialized agencies to continue to observe International Day of Rural Women annually, 15 October, as proclaimed by the General Assemb its resolution 62/136.

8. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary of Committee) announced that Angola, Antigua

Barbuda, Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Paraguay, Peru and Zimbabwe had also joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

**Agenda item 69: Promotion and protection of human rights** (*continued*) (A/64/81)

**(a) Implementation of human rights instruments** (*continued*) (A/64/40 (Vol. I), A/64/40 (Vol. II), A/64/44, A/64/48, A/64/128 and Corr.1, A/64/212, A/64/215 and Corr.1, A/64/264, A/64/276 and A/64/306 and Corr.1)

9. **Ms. Hill** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the CANZ group of countries (Canada, Australia and New Zealand), noted the continuing momentum of support for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The CANZ countries commended the Conference of States Parties to the Convention for its work and for the level of practical engagement demonstrated by States, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions at its first meetings. The rights of persons with disabilities should be promoted by a robust domestic legislative framework. The CANZ countries therefore welcomed the resolution on the Convention adopted by the Human Rights Council, which focused on legislative measures.

10. International cooperation, including development assistance, should improve the quality of life of children, women and men with disabilities, build the capacities of their organizations and of national human rights institutions and assist partner countries to comply with the Convention. In the Pacific subregion, a number of disability initiatives were receiving joint support from Australia and New Zealand.

11. Persons with disabilities in the developing world were among those bearing the brunt of the global economic crisis. Marshalling the unique and vital contribution of persons with disabilities and protecting their human rights should be part of any Government plan for stabilization and recovery. The CANZ countries welcomed the establishment of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and encouraged all delegations to sponsor the draft resolution on the Convention.

12. **Mr. Ashiki** (Japan) said that the Human Rights Council played a significant role in broadening the areas in which the international community's common values — human rights and fundamental freedoms — were assured. Japan had contributed to the discussions leading to the establishment of the Council and had served as a member since that time. There were still issues to be addressed, however, if the Council was to become a truly effective body, and his delegation would participate actively in the review of its functions in 2011.

13. Japan continued to give serious consideration to how to implement the treaties it had ratified and create a society in which human rights were more fully respected. The United Nations played an important role in establishing universal norms and standards in that area. In July 2009, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had considered Japan's sixth periodic report. In the same month, Japan had ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, which recognized enforced disappearance as a criminal activity subject to punitive measures. Japan would continue its efforts to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the earliest possible date.

14. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that Colombia was among the States that had ratified the highest number of international human rights treaties. It was up to date with its reporting obligations and paid special attention to the recommendations of the treaty bodies. In April 2009, Colombia had submitted its first report to the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

15. The solid framework of fundamental rights provided by the Constitution had led to important advances in jurisprudence. Human rights treaties ratified by Colombia were incorporated into the constitutional framework, and domestic legislation brought into line with those instruments. Legislation on the recently approved Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was under review prior to ratification.

16. In Colombia, over 10 per cent of the population was Afro-Colombian. Since the adoption of the 1991 Constitution, State policies and legislation for recognition, promotion and protection of their rights had been implemented, although there were still challenges to be overcome in ensuring their full realization. The United Nations support for national efforts to benefit the millions of people of African descent in different regions of the world was essential.

17. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that his country had signed and ratified a number of international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Sudan was convinced of the importance of dialogue and negotiation in international efforts to address human rights issues. Furthermore, it was committed to improving the human rights situation on its territory in the aftermath of protracted internal conflicts in Southern and Eastern Sudan. The Government's signing of peace agreements for both regions and the adoption of a transitional Constitution in 2005 had supported its efforts to that end and placed Sudan in the vanguard in its region with regard to the promotion of certain rights, such as women's and minority rights.

18. A politicized pursuit of the human rights agenda that favoured the strong while neglecting the sovereignty of weaker parties violated principles of human rights that had been agreed upon internationally. In that connection, his Government called for constructive dialogue between civilizations in order to find a common basis for consolidating and strengthening human rights. Moreover, his delegation found that the activities of some special representatives often exceeded their mandates, at the expense of the indispensable principles of integrity, neutrality and transparency.

19. Sudan reaffirmed its commitment to cooperating with United Nations mechanisms in the hope of consolidating and promoting human rights in Sudan. In that context, his delegation welcomed the resolution of the Human Rights Council ending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Sudan. Sudan would continue to abide by the Council's resolutions, the most recent of which aimed at strengthening technical cooperation on human rights through the appointment of an independent expert.

20. Human rights violations remained a matter of concern, as well as a harsh reality, particularly for the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territory, who faced a military machine that prevented them from exercising their most basic rights, let alone the right to demand the return of their land.

21. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba) said that her country had made significant achievements in human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights; civil and political rights; and the realization of third-generation or solidarity rights. The right to self-determination had been achieved despite obstacles and threats arising from the policy of hostility and blockade imposed by successive United States administrations. Achievements in health care, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports had been possible because the Cuban people controlled its political fate and the country's resources in a participatory democracy designed and approved by the people itself.

22. Cuba was a party to 42 human rights instruments and took its obligations seriously, including its reporting obligations. In 2008, Cuba had signed the international human rights Covenants, reflecting its willingness to strengthen cooperation in that area.

23. His Government had supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council, following the failure of the Commission on Human Rights, which had been immersed in politicization and manipulation. Cuba gave the same priority to economic, social and cultural rights as to civil and political rights and had engaged actively in creating international norms for human rights for all. As a founding and current member, Cuba continued to promote consolidation of the Council on the basis of mutual respect, international cooperation and constructive dialogue. Committed to cooperation with mechanisms implemented on a universal, non-discriminatory, non-selective and non-politicized basis, Cuba would continue to welcome visiting missions from the thematic procedures of the Council and had recently engaged in the universal periodic review mechanism, with excellent results. The former system of sanctions against countries of the South and automatic impunity for the countries of the North should not be repeated in the current human rights system.

24. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) said that China had acceded to many international human rights treaties and had already signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Legislative, judicial and administrative reforms were under way to align domestic legislation with the Covenant's provisions and prepare for its ratification. China fulfilled its obligations under international human rights treaties, paying full attention to the submission of periodic reports and engaging in dialogue and communication with the treaty bodies. In line with the principle of "one country, two systems", the Chinese Government actively supported the Governments of Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions in fulfilling

relevant treaty obligations and protecting human rights. China would submit its combined third and fourth report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Committee by the end of 2009 or in early 2010.

25. Human rights treaty bodies had played a positive role in the promotion and protection of human rights and China supported their efforts to streamline procedures and harmonize methodologies. Yet the current mechanism was still hampered by excessive complexity and a heavy reporting burden, in addition to overlapping mandates and duplication of work. Both the Secretary-General and the Inter-Committee Meeting of Human Rights Treaty Bodies had made recommendations on the reform of the treaty body system. China appreciated the reform efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other stakeholders.

26. China had maintained excellent dialogue and communications with the treaty bodies and implemented their constructive recommendations in accordance with its specific national conditions. Committee experts had been invited to visit China. Although in general, the committees complied with the principles of fairness, objectivity and neutrality in their work, some of them often exceeded their mandates and some individual Committee members had abused their power. All treaty bodies should maintain the credibility and legitimacy of their work, strictly abide by their mandates and rules of procedure and act cautiously when dealing with unverified information. The Committees should make targeted and practical concluding observations, take into account the specific conditions of States parties, and avoid politicization and selectivity in their work.

27. OHCHR and the treaty bodies should continue to strengthen their communication and dialogue with States parties. China was ready to work closely with other countries and continued to support the reform of treaty bodies and the reporting mechanisms in light of changing circumstances.

28. **Mr. González** (Costa Rica) said that Costa Rica had ratified all international human rights instruments, which took precedence over domestic legislation when they offered broader rights or guarantees. His Government assigned 55 per cent of the national budget to social spending, in particular for the most vulnerable and low-income groups. The wise decision taken 60 years previously to eliminate military spending had contributed to its achievements. The institutional framework had been strengthened by the rule of law, respect for citizens' rights and solidarity and the priority given to social protection networks. Costa Rica had spared no effort to promote the universal implementation of the basic human rights instruments and supported the work and independence of the Human Rights Council, the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies. Human rights were seen as inclusive, taking into account the needs and concerns of specific vulnerable groups.

29. Far more progress in human rights would be made without the uncontrolled and senseless arms race: a reduction in military expenditure would free resources for sustained investment in human development. Countries that were currently unable to meet the most basic needs of their peoples were spending billions of dollars on weapons. In the Latin American region, despite the billions allocated to military expenditure, the average rate of schooling was seven years and 20 million people lived in poverty. Such contradictions undermined the full exercise of human rights.

30. The rule of law and respect for human rights had been the foundation for Costa Rica's two years of service on the Security Council. Human rights were an essential element of agreements and resolutions seeking reconciliation and sustainable peace. They contributed to respect for the rule of law, security reform, the promotion of justice and the fight against impunity. Costa Rica had contributed to the adoption of Security Council resolutions on sexual violence, on children and armed conflict, and on women, peace and security. The Security Council should continue taking steps to be more effective in responding in a timely manner to threats to international peace and security.

31. If elected to the Human Rights Council for the period 2011-2013, Costa Rica intended to have a positive impact on institution-building. The effective exercise of human rights required the full enjoyment of suitable economic, social and environmental conditions. Consistency, integrity, transparency and an ethically responsible attitude were essential factors.

32. **Mr. Al-Malki** (Qatar) said that the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar guaranteed civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights included a national

commission and directorates responsible for, inter alia, addressing human rights complaints and bringing national legislation into line with international instruments to which his Government was a party. In 2009 his country had acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

33. Qatar would be presenting a national report for review by the Human Rights Council through the Universal Periodic Review process in 2010. His Government regarded the preparation of the report as an opportunity to deepen its understanding of human rights. In addition, Qatar had recently submitted its second periodic report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

34. Attesting to the importance his country attached to reform and political, economic and social development, the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region had recently opened in Qatar.

35. Turning to defamation of religions, his Government categorically rejected all forms of discrimination, hostility and violence against religions in the name of freedom of expression. Moreover, aware of the need to fight religious intolerance stemming from ignorance, Qatar had hosted numerous international conferences on interfaith dialogue over the years; the most recent had addressed the role of religious leaders in mobilizing human resources to confront natural disasters and the economic crisis.

36. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that human rights had to be understood in the context of the particular experiences and customs of each nation and civilization. Fundamental human rights were therefore unitary, but were also underscored by various particularities. The international community should have a comprehensive and even-handed approach to human rights, taking into consideration the national, regional, historical, cultural and religious particularities of each country. The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic ensured the right of citizens to enjoy their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Her country was party to over 25 relevant international instruments, including the seven core human rights treaties.

37. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided that everyone, without distinction of any kind, was entitled to the human rights set forth therein. However, certain States continued to advocate for such rights in a selective manner. In that connection, her country regretted the objection of certain countries to the report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, which condemned human rights violations committed by Israel. Furthermore, the politicization of humanitarian work and the prevailing political climate determined where loans and aid were directed. Such assistance had often been made conditional on political, economic or social reform, as a means to gain political concessions. Many States deserving such loans or aid had been denied them.

38. The previous two centuries had witnessed rapid global changes, with mixed results. Despite scientific progress, local and international conflict continued to cause humanitarian disasters and crimes. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had established measures to protect the human rights of those living under foreign occupation, which was in itself a serious violation of human rights. The international community should ensure respect of human rights without double standards, prioritizing the violations that had the most serious and widespread impact, such as foreign occupation.

39. **Mr. Yahiaoui** (Algeria) said that his country was a party to almost all international and regional human rights instruments. Appropriate domestic mechanisms guaranteed the rights and freedoms of Algerian citizens, both their individual civil and political rights and their collective economic, social and cultural rights. The judiciary, whose independence was guaranteed by the Constitution, had undergone extensive reform since 2000 and the study of human rights had been introduced into the educational system.

40. In line with the relevant United Nations standards and the Paris Principles, the National Advisory Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was an independent body, reporting to the President of the Republic. Human rights education was one of its concerns. Members were appointed by the President after a body of senior magistrates had ensured that the candidates met the criteria fixed by

law. Civil society also had a role in raising awareness of human rights.

41. Human rights issues should be considered with full respect for the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity. Algeria was revising legal codes and legislative texts to ensure more effective protection for human rights in line with international norms and the country's treaty commitments. Algeria had submitted its report to the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council in April 2008 and many other reports to international and regional treaty-monitoring committees and bodies.

42. Adherence to human rights instruments should not be selective. Yet the Convention on the protection of migrant workers had not been ratified by a single developed country, despite their declared attachment to human rights. It had been signed mostly by the countries of origin of migratory flows. Nor should the rights of peoples be sacrificed by an exclusive focus on protecting individual rights and freedoms. If human rights were indivisible, interdependent and inseparable, the international community should defend the right to peace, the sovereign exercise of the right to self-determination, the right to development and the right to live in a more secure world and a healthier environment.

43. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua had adapted its legal framework to comply with international human rights standards. Article 46 of the Political Constitution guaranteed respect for the human rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments to which Nicaragua was a party.

44. Her Government's priority was poverty eradication and the restoration of the economic and social rights that had been denied during 16 years of neo-liberal Governments. A national human development plan set out tasks and targets for progress against poverty, on the understanding that implementation of civil and political rights was also necessary to guarantee the development of peoples.

45. Nicaragua had established institutions to safeguard human rights, including the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, which had special units for children and adolescents, women, indigenous peoples and ethnic communities, persons with disabilities, and persons deprived of their liberty. Under the modernized justice system, the Office of the Public Defender provided free legal aid and the Office of the Attorney-General of the Republic had been separated from the Public Prosecutor's Office. All efforts to promote the application of international instruments had been carried out jointly by the Government and civil society organizations that were members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Human Rights.

46. Nicaragua was up to date with the submission of reports to the treaty bodies and was ensuring appropriate follow-up to most of their recommendations and observations. His Government was currently preparing for the universal periodic review mechanism.

47. **Ms. Sabja Daza** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the new Bolivian Political Constitution recognized and guaranteed all human rights, including economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. The Ministry of Justice was responsible for formulating, designing and implementing public policies and programmes to guarantee access to justice. The full exercise of individual and collective rights was based on the concept of "living well" which expressed the link between peoples and communities, respect for diversity and cultural identity. That concept was opposed to the predominant global idea of "living better", or always seeking to have more, without regard for the cost to other human beings or to nature. The model of capitalist development and accumulation was the main enemy of human rights.

48. The Bolivian national action plan on human rights had been presented in December 2008 during the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The human rights plan was part of the national development plan which established a new model for community social development and was implemented through four strategies — a dignified, sovereign, productive and democratic Bolivia. The concept of living well was complementary to human rights, especially economic, social and cultural rights. Her Government's plans and programmes included a nutritional plan, a plan to combat poverty, an equal opportunities plan, a strategic health plan and a national plan for social and solidarity housing. The Development Fund for Indigenous Native and Peasant Peoples would support, inter alia, the renovation and adaptation of the National Agrarian Reform Institute, the transitional inter-agency plan for

the Guaraní people, the organization of educational councils of native peoples, the creation of the first three intercultural indigenous universities and the military equal opportunities programme.

49. Despite the progress made, there were still some radical opposition groups which supported discrimination and racism and worked only in their own interests, including by spreading terrorism to divide Bolivia. One result of such action had been the Pando massacre. Such events could not diminish the commitment and efforts to construct a new Plurinational State of Bolivia and only strengthened the changes taking place in a democratic peaceful process with full respect for human rights.

50. **Ms. Rovirosa** (Mexico) said that the unprecedented level of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities demonstrated the level of agreement in the international community concerning the urgent need to promote and protect the human rights of one of the most vulnerable groups of people. The joint work in that area, with a swift but effective review of national policies to adapt them to the spirit of the Convention, should have a very favourable impact on the well-being of persons with disabilities. In the past, the focus on guardianship had not allowed persons with disabilities to recognize themselves as subjects with rights, and that protectionist approach had to give way to an approach based on equality of rights. Legislation should not maintain an approach that impeded the full recognition of human rights for persons with disabilities.

51. The Conference of States Parties to the Convention had established itself as a forum for the discussion of substantive issues, and for promoting an exchange of good practices and dialogue with civil society. Recognizing the value of an alliance between Governments and civil society, government and public, social and private institutions as well as civil society organizations were participating in the activities and strategies of Mexico's national programme for the development of persons with disabilities for the period 2009-2012.

52. **Mr. Mamdouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Human Rights Council, as the main global forum in that area, should continue its constructive spirit and practice. The treaty body system was one of the most important achievements of the United Nations human rights system, but it should not fall victim to the increasing number of treaty ratifications and overlapping of provisions. Duplication should be reduced wherever possible. The role of the treaty bodies was complementary to that of the Human Rights Council and they were a cornerstone of the universal periodic review mechanism.

53. Iran was a party to a number of international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and had recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His Government fulfilled its treaty obligations, adopting a number of legislative and other measures to implement treaty provisions and giving special attention to submission of periodic reports. The reports provided details of administrative, legislative and judicial developments and the main achievements in the fields of women's rights, education, poverty eradication and the establishment of justice. The international community, in its joint efforts, should promote all human rights, including the right to preserve cultural identity, respect for sovereignty and the right of States to determine freely their own approach to progressive development.

54. **Mr. Al-Thubaity** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country's domestic and international efforts to protect and promote human rights were informed by its commitment to applying the Islamic Sharia, which upheld human dignity. As a result of the positive human rights measures adopted by his Government, it had been elected a member of the Human Rights Council at its first session in 2006 and re-elected for a second term in 2009.

55. Saudi Arabia undertook to work towards realizing the Council's objectives of strengthening effective coordination and mainstreaming human rights within the United Nations system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251. It had acceded to a number of United Nations and International Labour Organization conventions relating to human rights. Saudi Arabia had also acceded to the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, among other regional instruments.

56. At the domestic level, his country had established the first Government body for the promotion of human rights in 2005, in addition to a national organization for human rights that counted 41 members, 10 of whom

were women. Both bodies had participated in promoting a culture of human rights; monitoring and following up on any human rights violations; inspecting prison conditions; and formulating opinions on draft laws and regulations. Other recent achievements included the creation of an organization for Saudi journalists and the establishment of a centre for national dialogue in 2003; and the holding of municipal elections in 2005. Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz had received the Lech Walesa Prize in recognition of his charity work and efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

57. A national strategy had been adopted to protect integrity and fight corruption. Furthermore, the policy of deporting foreign prisoners to their home countries took into account the rights of the prisoner as well as the difficulties encountered by their families in attempting to visit them. Both measures had been commended by international human rights bodies.

58. Despite having been a victim of terrorist attacks, the security measures taken by his Government had been balanced and had therefore not infringed upon human rights or impeded the application of justice. Lastly, Saudi Arabia's experiment in combating terrorism and extremist thinking through interactive programmes aimed at counselling participants and reintegrating them into society had been successful and well-received internationally.

59. **Mr. Koh** Sang-wook (Republic of Korea) said that as a State party to seven core human rights instruments, the Republic of Korea worked to fulfil its treaty obligations. In that connection, it would soon submit its third periodic report on implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for review.

60. Despite the progress made in codifying human rights and implementing relevant instruments in recent years, much still needed to be done to narrow the gap between human rights ideals and reality. States should incorporate international human rights treaties into domestic law, and people should gain a better understanding of the rights protected in such treaties through human rights education.

61. The upcoming review of the Human Rights Council would constitute a critical juncture for that mechanism. A productive and effective review should be carried out in order to enhance the credibility and reinforce the impact of the Council's work, ensuring that it maintained its focus on pressing human rights issues.

62. **Mr. Adouki** (Congo) said that his country had undertaken the post-war reconstruction process with a firm commitment to the rule of law and respect for human rights. In that connection, a ministry of human rights and a national commission on human rights had been established, and an innovative legal framework had been put in place. Furthermore, a law aimed at modernizing the justice system and improving prison conditions was being drafted, and renovation of correctional facilities was envisaged.

63. His country had undergone the universal periodic review earlier that year and was working to implement the recommendations made, with the support of the United Nations system and NGOs. Moreover, in spite of financial difficulties, the Government had allocated funds in order to support the activities of the national human rights commission. Government initiatives to promote and protect human rights in schools included civic education, moral education and education for peace.

64. **Mr. Abdulla** (Iraq) said that the protection of human rights was of great significance to the new Iraq. Having completed the legislative procedures for accession to a number of international human rights instruments, his Government had established a national system to monitor human rights violations. Significant improvements had also been made on the issue of prisoners, missing persons and mass graves. In addition, over $200 million had been allocated to assist internally displaced persons and to facilitate the return of refugees to Iraq.

65. Iraq was making every effort to promote the independence and impartiality of the judiciary in order to ensure full protection of human rights. The Iraqi Parliament had drafted and enacted several laws that were in line with international conventions, including a law on justice and accountability, anti-corruption legislation and a law aimed at protecting journalists.

66. Turning to economic and social issues, progress had been achieved in rebuilding the country's infrastructure and opening up to the global economy despite difficulties and security challenges, resulting in increased income and employment opportunities. The social protection programme run by the Ministry of

Labour and Social Affairs was extending assistance to vulnerable groups.

67. **Ms. Kaulung'ombe** (Zambia) said that despite financial constraints that had compromised Zambia's ability to guarantee economic, social and cultural rights, it had continued to work to improve access to health services, promote free basic education in Government schools and provide relief food to impoverished parts of the country.

68. While the recommendations made by treaty bodies had helped her country implement the various human rights treaties to which it was a party, the multiplicity of reporting obligations to treaty bodies had made it difficult for Zambia to submit its reports on time. In that regard, her Government would welcome technical and material assistance from OHCHR and cooperating partners.

69. Zambia had made substantial progress in incorporating the provisions of international human rights instruments into domestic law. It had enacted legislation aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour and combating human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children.

70. Zambia was an active member of the Human Rights Council. In addition, it had undergone the universal periodic review process the previous year and had taken due consideration of the Council's concluding observations. Zambia had also invited all special procedures mandate holders working on human rights to visit the country. An independent expert on extreme poverty and human rights had visited Zambia in August of that year to evaluate a Government-run cash transfer programme.

71. Other measures taken in fulfilment of human rights obligations included debate on a new constitution with a comprehensive bill of rights, establishment of a parole board and provision of legal aid in provincial areas to ensure access to justice for all. Moreover, police officers, prosecutors and judges were being trained on how to handle child witnesses in a manner that ensured that victims of human rights violations were heard and protected.

72. At the regional level, Zambia was a member of the African Peer Review Mechanism and had undergone its first review earlier that year.

73. In order to address the challenge posed by the population's lack of knowledge on human rights entitlements under the Constitution and other laws, the Government and civil society were working to provide civic education.

74. **Mr. Reina Idiaquez** (Honduras) said that in recent decades, human rights violations in his country had been in gradual decline due to the efforts of successive, legitimately elected Governments, reflecting both a commitment to fulfil their international obligations and a profound conviction on their part. That progress was currently being disrupted, and the human rights of the Honduran people trampled, by a de facto Government that had deposed the democratically elected President, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales. Speaking on behalf of President Zelaya, who was currently sequestered in the Embassy of Brazil and could not freely enter or leave the country, he condemned the coup d'état in the strongest possible terms and called for the legitimate Government to be reinstated, a call that had been echoed by the General Assembly and the Organization of American States. While the democratically elected Government and the current leadership were in talks, the actions of the latter had demonstrated its unwillingness to cooperate. Barring the prior restoration of the rightful Government, the upcoming electoral process must not be recognized, lest it legitimize the current regime.

75. Speaking as the representative of the legitimate Government of Honduras, he endorsed the proposals made by the delegation of Cuba regarding the use of mercenaries. He hoped that the rule of law and constitutional order would soon be restored in his country, as human rights could not flourish in the absence of democracy.

76. **Mr. Al-Mutairi** (Kuwait) said that his Government attached great importance to human rights issues and ensured equal access to social protection, health care and education for all its citizens. Over the previous two decades, his country had acceded to various United Nations and International Labour Organization conventions relating to human rights. At the regional level, Kuwait had signed the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam and the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

77. In any discussion of the question of human rights, the Committee must not forget the suffering of the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories, who were subjected to human rights violations at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces, particularly after recent

discussion by the Human Rights Council of the report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict led by Justice Richard Goldstone. The report's findings further emphasized the need to abide by international conventions and international humanitarian law.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

78. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation), responding to comments made at the previous meeting by the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in relation to the recent murders of human rights defenders in North Caucasia, said that measures had been taken to investigate those crimes and the results were controlled by the investigative committee of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation. The information had been given to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and could be made available again, if necessary. Her Government attached importance to the work of human rights defenders and supported them, when they so requested. A recent example was the security provided for workers at the Memorial human rights centre in Chechnya, after they received threats from unidentified individuals.

79. The decision regarding the date of the Special Rapporteur's visit would be made jointly with him. The Russian Federation was trying to find a mutually agreeable solution so that the visit could take place in conditions which would satisfy the Special Rapporteur and not contradict Russian law.

*The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.*